



STATE OF IOWA

THOMAS J. VILSACK, GOVERNOR
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

To: Honorable Governor Vilsack
Honorable Lieutenant Governor Pederson
Honorable Senator Grassley
Honorable Senator Harkin
Honorable Representative Boswell
Honorable Representative King
Honorable Representative Latham
Honorable Representative Leach
Honorable Representative Nussle

From: Iowa Department of Education

Subject: Additional information on Iowa student eligibility for
new federal Academic Competitiveness (AC) grants

Date: June 28, 2006

Beginning in the fall of 2006, students entering post-secondary education or completing their first year of post-secondary education will have an additional financial aid option for college. Every state will offer access to the federal Academic Competitiveness (AC) Grant program through the existing Pell Grant system. These AC grants are available to any full-time post-secondary student that is a US citizen, is Pell-eligible, and has completed a rigorous secondary school program of study.

The federal regulation offers four "default" options for the definition of rigorous program, two that are applicable in Iowa, and two that are not (Iowa does not have a graduated diploma nor a State Scholar initiative). Iowa has also been tentatively approved for a third "Iowa" option for defining a rigorous program. The three ways students in Iowa can qualify as having taken a rigorous high school program are as follows:

1. (Federal default option) Completing, at a minimum, two Advanced Placement (AP) courses and obtaining a score of 3 or higher on the exams for those two courses;
2. (Federal default option) Passing a core curriculum consisting of 4 years of English, 3 years of math (including Algebra and a higher level course such as Algebra II, Geometry, or Data Analysis and Statistics), 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies, and 1 year of a foreign language;

3. (Iowa-specific option) Same as option 2 above with the following change: 1 year of foreign language OR 3 courses in a career and technical sequence.

Students who successfully complete one of the above rigorous high school program options and are Pell-eligible may qualify for an additional Pell award of \$750. This grant expands to \$1300 in the second year if the student is able to maintain a 3.00 cumulative GPS during the first year of the student's undergraduate program. Students completing high school in another state and attending post-secondary education in Iowa may qualify under their state's approved options.

On or about July 1, 2006, the US Department of Education will notify via mail 2006-07 Federal Student Aid applicants of this opportunity. These students will be directed to a special website for them to provide additional information that will help the student self-certify potential eligibility under this program. At this writing, the Iowa Department of Education has no further information about the specific URL for this website access.

The Iowa Department of Education will collaborate with the Iowa College Student Aid Commission to ensure a broad dissemination of access information to this program. Post-secondary institutions have already been informed of the Iowa criteria and may be the first and best methods of ensuring students get accurate information about this program. We intend to use various websites, email distribution lists, and news releases to advertise this opportunity.

We wanted to make you aware of Iowa's effort regarding this new program implementation. Please contact Jeff Berger, 515-281-3399 or jeff.berger@iowa.gov, with any additional questions or concerns.